

# Health care

The stereotype says the big problem with health care is not enough people have health coverage. That is a problem, but there are two bigger issues:

- (1) Those lucky enough to have health coverage are getting squeezed by higher premiums, skyrocketing prices for their prescription medicines and piles of paperwork; and
- (2) Most people get health coverage from their job, but businesses say they can't afford to keep paying for double-digit increases in health insurance costs.

I support strong reforms to make health care more affordable for all workers, seniors and businesses. It's wrong that people working full-time jobs have to struggle to get affordable health coverage for their families.

## Patient safety

Doctors need relief from high malpractice insurance rates. Some doctors say they're quitting the profession or moving to another state because of the insurance rates, which are especially high for high-risk practices like the doctors who deliver babies.

Insurance lobbyists want us to follow the lead of other states like Florida, where they limited your right to a jury trial. The problem with this approach is it hurts citizens and didn't do a thing about the rates doctors pay. In fact, doctors in Florida just got hit with huge increases in their malpractice insurance coverage.

There's a better way to help doctors and patients, and that's to prevent the medical errors that lead to malpractice suits. I'm introducing legislation to improve safety and I support a package of innovative reforms to fix this problem, including eliminating barriers to sharing information about medical errors so we can prevent patient injuries and deaths while helping doctors with these high rates.

## Cheaper medicines from Canada

Today, health care wouldn't work without modern prescription medicines. But too many citizens – especially seniors – can't afford the medicines they need to stay healthy and alive.

I support a bold reform to make prescription medicines more affordable: buy our medicines from Canada, where the same exact medicines can cost half or a third of the price.

Why should you pay more for the same exact prescription drug?

Passing this reform means we pick a fight with the federal government, as other states and cities are doing, but this battle isn't just about money but human lives. And it's worth fighting.



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# 2004 Session Report



**Representative**

**Laura  
Ruderman**

**45th District**

# 2004 Session Report

Dear neighbors,

Citizens rarely tell me they want things done a specific way. They just want results — more jobs, better health care, less traffic and crime — and don't really care how it happens or who gets the credit.

Instead of refighting the old political battles about the size and role of government, we need to focus on quality and results.

This newsletter is about common-sense reforms to restore prosperity to our state. It's about breaking through partisan gridlock in Olympia to achieve:

- the best schools;
- the best jobs; and
- the best health care.

Politicians haven't cornered the market on good ideas. Our state has some of the smartest and most creative citizens in the world, and it'd be a huge mistake to let that talent stay locked in a box.

If we work together, we can find innovative solutions to improve our local schools, create jobs and fix the health-care crisis.

What do you think? I'd like to hear from you. Please send me your ideas, questions or comments. You can reach me by phone, e-mail or regular mail.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your representative. It's an honor.

Sincerely,

REP. LAURA RUDERMAN  
45th District

**Committees and Leadership:**  
*Vice chair*, House Democratic  
Caucus

*Vice chair*, Technology,  
Telecommunications and Energy  
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## A vision for the future

Washington state prospers when we work together to build the best products in the world — the best airplanes at Boeing and the best software at Microsoft.

We can't rest on that proud history. Not when Airbus, for the first time, sold more airplanes than Boeing.

Our businesses and workers aren't just competing with others in Oregon and British Columbia, but with corporations in Iowa, Brazil, and China.

For every company in Washington state that's a world market leader, there's a dozen competitors pushing to take the crown.



And the prize for second place is thousands of people who had great jobs start punching a calculator to find out how long they can pay the mortgage and their kids' college tuition with severance pay and unemployment checks.

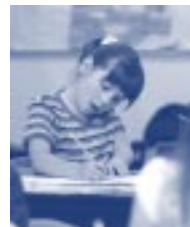
## The best education

We have to fight hard to be the best, and that means having the best educated workers and citizens in the world.

### Create the best schools

We must improve our schools. That means:

- Attracting and keeping the best teachers — With better recruiting, better pay, and less red tape for teachers so they can spend their time teaching.
- Passing the simple majority reform — It's outrageous for politicians to argue that 59 percent of the vote is a landslide victory for them but a failure for a local school which needs to fix or replace an old and overcrowded school.
- Fixing our testing system — Statewide testing is important to make sure students are getting the same great education, but the state test (the WASL) needs reform before 2008, when all high school seniors must pass it to graduate. We'll consider a number of reforms this session.



### Education for all

We have to plug the holes in our schools and colleges.

- Almost one in three high school students drop out.
- Half of all college freshman drop out — often because they can't afford to keep going — before getting their degree.

- In 2008, the largest graduating class of high school seniors will knock on the doors of our colleges and universities, and those doors will stay shut unless we make room for 30,000 more students in our lecture halls and labs. It's wrong to tell an entire generation of students they can't earn a college degree, the surest ticket to the American Dream.

Those drop-out rates are a huge waste of human potential and taxpayer money. Ask any police officer you know and they'll tell you that most criminals aren't educated — many are not only dropouts but can't even read. It costs taxpayers \$25,000 a year to feed and guard a single prisoner. The state pen costs more than Penn State.

Our goal should be the best high school and college graduation rates in the nation, then when we've achieved that, the best in the world.

### Get people involved

Third, parents and the community need to be involved in our schools and our democracy. An everyday person *can* make a difference.

- Getting parents involved in schools — Experts say the biggest factors in whether a child succeeds or fails are all up to parents: what expectations the parents set for a child's schoolwork, how many books are in the home, how much TV the child watches and how often a child is absent from school.
- Restoring trust in our democracy — We need to (1) change the attitude that everyday people can't change things in city hall or the Legislature, (2) save our open primary system from being thrown out by the courts again and (3) safeguard your vote by requiring a voter-verifiable audit trail and strict controls for electronic voting machines.
- Giving citizens the keys to their democracy — It's tough for citizens to get involved when there are barriers standing in the way of the information they need and their lawmakers. I support reforms to give citizens the keys to their democracy with more information available to citizens anywhere by putting it on the web. We also must reform archaic restrictions on how lawmakers and citizens can communicate by e-mail.

## Town hall meetings Saturday, Feb. 21

10 a.m., Woodinville City Council Chambers  
1 p.m., Redmond City Council Chambers  
4 p.m., Carnation City Council Chambers

## The best jobs

Our highest priority has to be giving our businesses the right tools to succeed: (1) a transportation system that gets goods to market and people where they need to go and (2) workers with the creativity and high-tech skills to create world-class products.

### Fixing traffic gridlock

Last year, we broke through 13 years of political gridlock to pass a real transportation plan. We're on the right path, but we need to do more to unclog traffic.



- Better planning with less red tape — Right now, dozens of city, county and state agencies fight over transportation turf. Nobody's in charge and it takes forever to get things done. That must change. I support reforms to make the system work, with joint planning and services that complement each other instead of compete.
- A regional plan that works — King, Pierce and Snohomish counties are supposed to be working together to fix our common traffic problems. The regional plan hasn't gotten past first base because of political bickering and the faulty nature of the bill, which was designed to be the missing half to a referendum that doesn't exist anymore. We can't fix traffic on I-405 and Highway 202 without reforming this law.

### The right skills for the best jobs



Our top priority should be producing graduates with the skills needed for the best jobs. That's not happening right now.

Microsoft is hiring thousands of new workers — but only a handful are graduates of our universities, despite the fact that the UW is one of the top research universities in the nation.

This is a tremendous lost opportunity.

I support reforms to boost the number of graduates in high-skill, high-demand fields — the same jobs that pay the best salaries. That includes biotech, engineering, computers and health care.

**Rep. Laura Ruderman**  
**45th District**